At 45, Sen. Ted Kennedy (D., Mass.), shown in the writer's study, has already spent 15 years in the Senate. How much longer will he be content as a Senator, or will he one day make the Presidential run?

Quizzing Teddy Kennedy

by Lloyd Shearer

LOS ANGELES, CAL.

Last month, Edward Moore Kennedy, 45, the senior U.S. Senator from Massachusetts, held subcommittee hearings in the black and Chicano districts of this city.

Media persons who covered Teddy Kennedy found him—with his strong, clear voice, his broad, handsome face, his bright blue eyes and curly, graying hair—as photogenic and charismatic as ever. Several reporters, among them this one, wondered what had happened to "the inevitable Presidency of Teddy Kennedy."

Before a peanut-farmer-turned-politician, Jimmy Carter, edged himself into the last Presidential race, the prospect of Teddy Kennedy occupying the White House in the post-Watergate 1970's seemed reasonable and problematical.

In early 1974 all the national polls revealed Kennedy as the front-runner for the Democratic Presidential nomination. Other potential contenders (we forget how many developed)—Senators Lloyd Bentsen of Texas, Walter Mondale of Minnesota, Henry Jackson of Washington, Frank Church of Idaho, Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota, George McGovern of South Dakota, Birch Bayh of Indiana, ex-Sen. Fred Harris of Oklahoma, Gov. Milton Shapp of Pennsylvania, Gov. Jerry Brown of California, Rep. Morris Udall of Arizona, Gov. George Wallace of Alabama, Sargent Shriver of Maryland, and Jimmy Carter of Georgia—all knew that if Teddy Kennedy really wanted it, the 1976 Democratic nomination was his.

But after months of self-assessment and soul-searching, Teddy Kennedy decided not to run. Why? Mail from the public indicated that many voters had not forgotten the July 1969 night at Chappaquiddick when his car plunged into the water and Mary Jo Kopechne, the 28-year-old girl at his side, drowned. The Republican opposition was sure to re-tell that accident and make it an issue of character.

In addition, further tragedy had struck the Kennedy household. The Senator's son Teddy Jr., invaded by cancer, lost his right leg. The Senator's wife Joan, wracked by emotional instability, developed a drinking problem. The Senator's 13 nieces and nephews, the offspring of his two assassinated brothers, John and Robert, regarded him as a surrogate father. And always there hung over Teddy the specter of further assassination, the possibility that another madman might gun him down just as two had killed his brothers.

Accordingly on Sept. 23, 1974, Teddy took himself out of the running. "...My primary responsibilities are at home," he explained. "It has become quite apparent to me that I would be unable to make a full commitment to a campaign for the Presidency. I simply cannot do that to my wife and children and the other members of the family."

Did Senator Kennedy, via that statement, abandon for all time his hopes for White House occupancy? Would he possibly seek the Democratic Presidential nomination in 1980, 1984, 1988, 1992? Would he remain wed to the U.S. Senate until retirement?

To determine his views, I asked the Senator the following questions:

Q. Do you still have any Presidential ambitions?

A. I've been reelected by the people of Massachusetts to another term in the Senate which has five more years to go.

Q. Are you reconciled to remaining a United States Senator indefinitely?

A. I expect to remain in the United States Senate for the foreseeable future. I believe President Carter will be renominated and reelected in 1980, and I expect to support him in that campaign. Beyond that I haven't given any real thought to what might happen. It's simply too far in the future to speculate.

Q. Do you believe in the conspiracy theories concerning the murders of your two brothers? And are you satisfied that each was the scheme of one man?

A. It is always easy to criticize investigations years after they take place. But my family and I have remained satisfied with the conclusions of the official inquiries into the deaths of both my brothers.

Q. What is your relationship with the President—hot, lukewarm or cold?

A. I feel that I've got a strong, mutually responsive relationship with President Carter. Personally, he's been kind, considerate and helpful, and I like him very much.

Q. What sort of President do you think Carter has been in his first year?

A. President Carter has made a number of important contributions in his first year in office. In the area of foreign policy I believe that his emphasis on human rights has given new hope to millions of people around the world who cannot enjoy the rights most Americans take for granted. His effort to reach an agreement with the Russians on strategic arms offers the prospect that we can control the nuclear threat.

In domestic policy, I think the President's efforts to deal with the energy crisis have been enormously important. It's not an easy task, and it's one which will take years to complete. But he deserves full credit for making the first real attempt to deal with the matter on a comprehensive basis, and I've tried to support him in that effort.

In a variety of critical areas we've worked closely together. Most recently, for example, the Administration and I, with the late Sen. John McClellan of Arkansas and others, were able to agree on a complete revision of the U.S. criminal code, an effort that had not been undertaken in 200 years of this nation's history. The result has been that the Senate Judiciary Committee recently reported out an enormously complex bill to revise the entire code. It's a step that will have important implications in our nationwide effort to combat crime and improve the fairness of our criminal justice system.

I also expect to be working closely with the President in the coming year as the Administration develops its proposals on tax reform, national health insurance, and other matters.

Q. Do you believe that we should recognize the People's Republic of China, and if so, when?

A. I believe that the United States should move as quickly as possible toward normalized relations with the People's Republic of China. We cannot conduct a realistic foreign policy while failing to conduct normal relations with the most populous and one of the most important nations in the world.

Q. What work have you done in the U.S. Senate that you are most proud of?

A. Over the long term, I'm most proud of my efforts to improve the quality of health care in the United States. As chairman of the Senate Health Subcommittee I've been able to play a role in legislative efforts to improve community health programs, to bring

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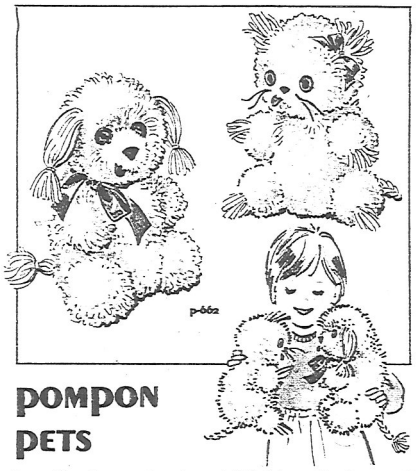

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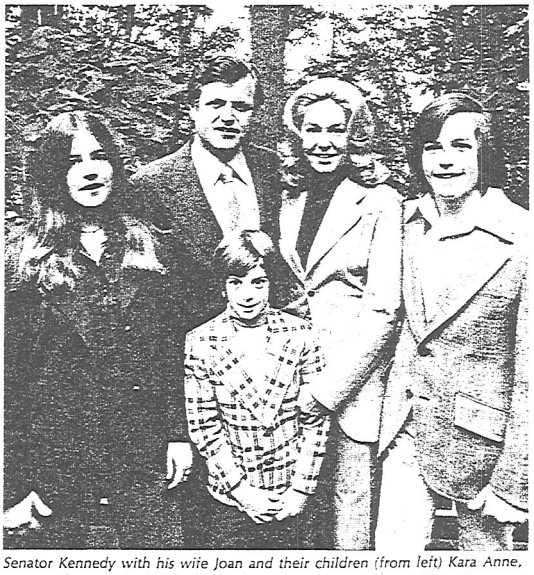

Senator Kennedy with his wife Joan and their children (from left) Kara Anne, 17; Patrick, 10, and Edward Jr., 16. They plan to tour China after Christmas.

KENNEDY *CONTINUED*

the focus of the federal government to bear on the problem of mental retardation, and to insure that the drugs we use are both safe and effective.

I'm hopeful that efforts now underway to reduce the cost of medical care for the elderly and to provide for a nationwide system of health insurance will prove fruitful in the near future. Much remains to be done in this field. But we've made an important start, and I'm proud that I've been able to play a key role in that effort.

If I had to point to a single legislative achievement that gives me the most satisfaction, however, I would cite the legislation to extend the right to vote to 18-year-olds. Persons between the ages of 18 and 21 are qualified to serve in the military, to pay taxes if they work, and to conduct nearly all their affairs as adults. There's no reason they should have been denied the right to vote, and I'm particularly proud that the legislation extending them the franchise bears my name.

Q. If you could have anything in life that you don't have now, what is it that you would most want?

A. Life has been extraordinary to me and my family. We have, of course, had our share of tragedy. But I think that the chance to repay this nation for the benefits it has bestowed on me and my family is the only opportunity I would hope for. I feel that my work in the Senate offers me this chance to repay at least part of that debt, and I am grateful to the people of my state and many others around the nation who have aided me in that task.

Q. What do you consider the most pressing problem in the world today?

A. Certainly the most immediate problem is the issue of nuclear arms control. President Carter has made some important new initiatives in the effort to arrive at an agreement with the Soviet Union to control the nuclear menace. Now there are indications that the Soviets may be willing to reciprocate. But the problem goes beyond the superpowers. We must also find a way to control the spread of nuclear weapons to smaller countries so that we don't face the continual risk of having a small border dispute in some remote corner of the world escalate into a holocaust that could engulf us all.

Over the long term, a major problem facing the world is the growing disparity between the wealthy nations and the lesser developed countries. This manifests itself in a number of areas—hunger, overpopulation, health care, industrial development, and standards of living. Unless we can find a way to bring the poorer nations of the world out of the cycle of deprivation and despair in which they now exist, we can never hope for any real progress toward world peace.

Q. What do you consider the most pressing problem in the United States?

A. The most pressing problem in the United States is the economy. Unemployment, inflation, and the energy crisis are all interrelated segments of the economic difficulties we face. To find a way to put the unemployed to work without kindling new inflation and to solve the energy crisis without a major jolt to the economy must be given top priority. These problems must be solved before we can begin to make real progress in the effort to fight crime, to improve health care, to increase the quality of education, and to progress in so many other areas. P